

Dear Friends,

### **Australian Quaker Centre**

This is to convey to you further information than was available for Documents in Advance. I have tried to get it to you in time for November Business Meetings, being held on this and next weekends.

The AQC has completed a 7-week course program at *Silver Wattle*. November will be unprogrammed residential time on a B&B basis. In dollar terms, we may make a small operational loss, which will be covered by a personal donation given to support establishing the AQC. There will be no AYM debt to be borne by RMs.

We have sufficient feedback now, from evaluation sheets and personal comments, to make the following summaries:

*Silver Wattle* provides a wonderful, peaceful, secluded and inspiring setting with abundant birds and wildlife. The cold will restrict offerings during the winter and early spring. While the hills behind the buildings have been degraded by feral goats most of the property is in a natural state.

Accommodation is rated adequate to very good, though individual desks and chairs are needed in the rooms. The main meeting room is very suitable with comfortable chairs, though it needs heating in winter. The library and computer/internet access would be better in a different room. Meals were rated very good by most, though better planning for restricted diets is needed. Our aim is to keep food simple, and the AQC diet is less varied than some expect as we balance two issues: providing locally grown, seasonal and sustainable food while maintaining cost control.

*Silver Wattle* has an exceptionally conducive atmosphere for spiritual development and personal interaction during courses. Its open landscape and birdlife are especially appreciated. The presence of a Resident Elder every week to hold all in the Light, and to support, staff, teachers and participants in private discussions, has been very important.

We realize many things went wonderfully well, and a great many people have said how valuable was their time at AQC. Other things did not work so well and must be remedied in 2010. Staffing was a major challenge with a sequence of cooks and elders each week. Unexpected problems with the heating of rooms, water supply and cold food storage took time to be fixed and strained people's patience.

Based on feedback and the experience of resident staff, we see *Silver Wattle* as a very suitable place to house the AQC. Advantages include its facilities, standard of accommodation and size. Now we know the place, we wish to avoid the huge effort that would be involved in searching for and negotiating other venues year by year. Further, we can build on established advertising, web presence. Accordingly we have started discussions with the Catholic Diocese, owners of the property, to explore ways to use

*Silver Wattle* during 2010 and perhaps beyond. Initially we have arranged for the AQC to stay for a further 3 months on a caretaker basis, while a full report on possible options is prepared for YM 2010 in Adelaide.

We know we need a cheaper course structure if possible, and are drawing up a 2010-2012 plan, noting the following points:

Deepening our Quaker faith is the core AQC business, so courses in Quaker heritage, spirituality and prayer are prime concerns. We anticipate several of the 2009 courses will become annual offerings.

We need a business plan, which draws from broader markets, especially faith groups and community organizations working for the environment, peace and justice.

We need to build on relationships already started with Indigenous peoples and Elders. Some other possible AQC activities include:

- Family and children's camps including spiritual, outdoor and music offerings
- Visits by Quakers and Quaker groups from overseas
- Involvement in March 2010 in the biennial, two-week "Weereewa Festival" of science, environment and arts, focusing on the local area.
- Retreats for other faiths and groups
- Nonviolence training
- Preparation for living in a world beyond peak oil
- Mini-conferences or planning sessions for local church, government and NGO groups.

We hope to distribute further information for Friends in early December, on planning for an AQC in 2010.

David Johnson, Helen Bayes & John Baker  
Lead team for the AYM AQC Working Group  
31/10/2009

Helen Bayes  
[helenbayes@me.com](mailto:helenbayes@me.com)  
0422138991